

What is claimed is:

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A!*

1. A method to update a software module, comprising:  
2 identifying a first version of the software module;  
3 identifying a second version of the software module;  
4 determining which of the first version and the second version of the  
5 software module is most current; and  
6 indicating that version of the software module determined to be most  
7 current.

1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising obtaining that version of the  
2 software module determined to be the most current version.

1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising loading the obtained version of  
2 the software module.

1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of identifying a first version of the  
2 software module comprises communicating with a physical device associated  
3 with the software module.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the act of communicating comprises  
2 determining an identifier value of the physical device.

1 6. The method of claim 5, further comprising determining a subsystem  
2 identifier value of the physical device.

1    7.    The method of claim 4, wherein the act of communicating comprises  
2    determining a basic input-output system version identifier value of the physical  
3    device.

1    8.    The method of claim 1, wherein the act of identifying a second version of  
2    the software module comprises communicating with an update information  
3    source.

1    9.    The method of claim 8, wherein the act of communicating further  
2    comprises:  
3         identifying the software module to the update information source;  
4         receiving, from the update information source, an indication of the second  
5    version of the software module.

1    10.   The method of claim 8, wherein the act of communicating comprises  
2    communicating by a modem.

1    11.   The method of claim 8, wherein the act of communicating comprises  
2    communicating by a computer network.

1    12.   The method of claim 8, wherein the act of communicating comprises  
2    communicating with a database server device.

1    13. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of determining comprises  
2    comparing at least one characteristic of the first identified first version of the  
3    software module with the same characteristic of the second identified first  
4    version of the software module.

1    14. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of indicating comprises visually  
2    displaying an indication of the software module determined to be the most  
3    current version to a user.

1    15. The method of claim 2, wherein the act of obtaining comprises retrieving  
2    that version of the software module determined to be the most current version  
3    from an update source.

1    16. The method of claim 15, wherein the act of retrieving comprises retrieving  
2    from an update source that is physically distinct from the location of the first  
3    identified version of the software module.

*Sub A 2*

- 1 17. A program storage device, readable by a programmable control device,  
2 comprising:  
3       instructions stored on the program storage device for causing the  
4       programmable control device to  
5           identify a first version of a software module;  
6           identify a second version of the software module;  
7           determine which of the first version and the second version of the  
8       software module is most current; and  
9           indicate that version of the software module determined to be most  
10      current.

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1 18. The program storage device of claim 17, further comprising instructions to  
2 obtain that version of the software module determined to be most current  
3 version.

1 19. The program storage device of claim 18, further comprising instructions to  
2 load the obtained version of the software module.

1 20. The program storage device of claim 17, wherein the instructions to  
2 identify a first version of the software module comprise instructions to  
3 communicate with a physical device associated with the software module.

1 21. The program storage device of claim 20, wherein the instructions to  
2 communicate comprise instructions to determine an identifier value of the  
3 physical device.

1    22. The program storage device of claim 21, further comprising instructions to  
2    determine a subsystem identifier value of the physical device.

1    23. The program storage device of claim 20, wherein the instructions to  
2    communicate comprise instructions to determine a basic input-output system  
3    version identifier value of the physical device.

1    24. The program storage device of claim 17, wherein the instructions to  
2    identify a second version of the software module comprise instructions to  
3    communicate with an update information source.

1    25. The program storage device of claim 24, wherein the instructions to  
2    communicate further comprise instructions to:  
3        identify the software module to the update information source;  
4        receive, from the update information source, an indication of the second  
5        version of the software module.

1    26. The program storage device of claim 24, wherein the instructions to  
2    communicate comprise instructions to communicate by a modem.

1    27. The program storage device of claim 24, wherein the instructions to  
2    communicate comprise instructions to communicate by a computer network.

- 1    28. The program storage device of claim 24, wherein the instructions to  
2    communicate comprise instructions to communicate with a database server  
3    device.
- 1    29. The program storage device of claim 17, wherein the instructions to  
2    determine comprise instructions to compare at least one characteristic of the first  
3    identified first version of the software module with the same characteristic of the  
4    second identified first version of the software module.
- 1    30. The program storage device of claim 17, wherein the instructions to  
2    indicate comprise instructions to visually display an indication of the software  
3    module determined to be the most current version to a user.
- 1    31. The program storage device of claim 18, wherein the instructions to  
2    obtain comprise instructions to retrieve that version of the software module  
3    determined to be the most current version from an update source.
- 1    32. The program storage device of claim 31, wherein the instructions to  
2    retrieve comprise instructions to retrieve from an update source that is physically  
3    distinct from the location of the first identified version of the software module.

1    33. A computer executed method to update a software module, comprising:  
2       identifying a software module;  
3       automatically obtaining version information of the software module from a  
4       local source;  
5       automatically obtaining version information of the software module from a  
6       non-local source;  
7       comparing the version information from the local source with the version  
8       information from the non-local source; and  
9       automatically retrieving an update module for the software module if the  
10      version information from the non-local source is newer than the version  
11      information from the local source.

1    34. The method of claim 33, wherein the act of retrieving further comprises  
2       updating the software module with the retrieved update module.

1    35. The method of claim 33, further comprising automatically updating the  
2       software module with a local update module obtained from a local media source  
3       if the version information from the local source is newer than the version  
4       information from the non-local source

1    36. The method of claim 33, wherein the act of obtaining version information  
2       from a local source comprises, obtaining version information from a registry file.

1    37. The method of claim 33, wherein the act of obtaining version information  
2       from a local source comprises, obtaining version information from a local floppy  
3       disk.

1    38. The method of claim 33, wherein the act of obtaining version information  
2    from a non-local source comprises, obtaining version information from a website.

1    38. The method of claim 33, wherein the act of obtaining version information  
2    from a non-local source comprises, obtaining version information from a world  
3    wide web site.

1    40. The method of claim 33, wherein the act of obtaining version information  
2    from a non-local source comprises, obtaining version information from dial-in  
3    server.

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